

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES  
(Final; Action)

CC.26.31 Student Nominations to the 2026-2027 Athletic Board

**BACKGROUND**

The Athletic Board is the committee concerned with intercollegiate athletics (varsity sports) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This Board is responsible to the Senate for the intercollegiate athletic program as it relates to the University's academic and educational objectives as defined by the Senate. The Athletic Board serves also as an advisory committee to the Chancellor and the Athletic Director on the financial management, personnel, and other operational aspects of the intercollegiate athletics program in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Two nominees for membership on the Board shall be elected by the Senate for each student position to be filled from the Senate. The Senate Committee on Committees shall propose nominees; additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Senate. Terms of students ordinarily shall be one year, and students may be appointed to a second one-year term.

**NOMINATIONS**

The Committee on Committees recommends approval of the following slate of nominees. Submitted statements of interest from nominees are attached.

The following students listed in random order are nominated to fill two student vacancies, with terms ending 2027. If no additional nominations are made, the nominees below will be forwarded to the Chancellor for selection of two.

Dylan Strackman	AHS
Lauryn Barnett	LAS
Katelyn Schwiderski	GRAD
Ben Aranda	LAS

Additional nominations may be made from the floor. Whether from the Committee on Committees or from the floor, each nomination shall have the consent of the nominee (*Bylaws* Part B.5).

COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES  
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## **STUDENT STATEMENTS OF INTEREST AND EXPERIENCE**

### **Dylan Strackman (AHS)**

Dylan Strackman's hands-on work with Illinois Athletics makes him a strong fit for the committee. As an Event Management Ambassador helping handle 21 Division I sports and a Football Video Manager, he has a clear view of the day-to-day operations of both men's and women's programs. He also strongly supports initiatives for minority participation in college sports. As a Pre-Law Recreation, Sport, and Tourism major, Dylan understands the University's mission and the importance of student-athlete welfare, especially the practical challenge of balancing academic and athletic demands. Finally, managing the "Illini Get Pickled" charity tournament and serving as his fraternity's Merchandise Chair has given him real-world business and financial experience. He regularly handles budgeting, vendor negotiations, and sponsorships. Dylan hopes to bring this practical mix of athletic, academic, and financial experience to help guide the committee.

### **Lauryn Barnett (LAS)**

Although not an athlete, Lauryn Barnett provides new perspectives to protect our athletes, helping to achieve more physically and academically. She has served as a team manager for her high school's basketball, football and women's volleyball teams and understands the hard work that goes into prestigious teams like the Fighting Illini. Lauryn's experience as head team manager inspires her to push for better funding for athletes whom want to play intercollegiate sports but cannot afford that opportunity. She also values the importance of education combined with athletics. Lauryn has hosted group study sessions for her football team after practice to make sure all of the players excel at the academic standards placed. Lauryn Barnett is a worthy nominee because of her dedication to the success of every athlete and to uphold the standards of the Athletic Board creating a stellar intercollegiate program of the future.

**Katelyn Schwiderski (GRAD)**

The nominee is a graduate student in the University of Illinois MBA program and a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Law. After several years in legal practice, the nominee now serves as a Region Business Manager for a large agricultural cooperative, bringing a combined foundation in governance, academic and educational objectives, and business and financial management. A lifelong athlete with a strong interest in both men's and women's sports, the nominee is committed to supporting equitable participation, including for minority student-athletes. The nominee is particularly focused on student-athlete welfare, especially mental health, and is dedicated to ensuring that the University of Illinois' athletic programs meet legal requirements and align with institutional values. This blend of legal training, business experience, and personal commitment to athletics positions the nominee to contribute meaningfully to the Athletic Board's work.

**Ben Aranda (LAS)**

Ben is actively involved in the athletic bands. He is a rising third year member of the Marching Illini, serving as Marching Section Leader. He is also a member of the Women's Hoops Band. With a minor in Recreation, Sport, & Tourism, he has taken multiple sport-related classes in the RST department and has knowledge of sports marketing, management, sponsorship and legal principles, all while he continues to drive to learn more through his academics. Ben has future aspirations to become a lawyer practicing sports law, specifically contract law, risk management, and intellectual property law. He is an active member of the Pre-Law Advisory Committee. Currently, he is working on research pertaining to Athlete Advocacy Groups with his RST professor, where he is thematically analyzing athlete interviews to support sport activism and player rights. Ben hopes to bring new perspectives to the Athletic Board and is eager to be involved.